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*Watchfulness. with respect to our  
L O R D's coming, explain'd and  
urg'd*


I N A

## Funeral S E R M O N.

Occasioned by the sudden D E A T H of

*Mrs. Catharine Whittington,*

Who departed this Life. Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>.  
1726-7. in the Seventy Seventh Year of  
her Age.

By J O S. R O G E R S O N. 



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M A T T. xxiv. 43.

*Watch therefore, for ye know  
not what Hour your Lord doth  
come.*

**I** Am called to improve the late Death and Funeral of Mrs. Catharine Whittington; and whilst I was reflecting upon the sudden and surprising manner in which she was removed, my Thoughts were directed to the words, which I have read to you, as the apparent Language of such a startling Providence, and a proper Subject upon such an Occasion. *Watch therefore for, &c.*

It is plain from the 1st. Verse of this Chapter, that it was upon the occasion of the Disciples admiring the Buildings of the Temple, the stateliness and magnificence of the Structure, and communicating their Thoughts in this matter to our blessed Lord, that he took the opportunity of delivering that Discourse, of which my Text is a part. To give a check to such fond and admiring Thoughts, he foretells the utter  
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Ruin and Desolation of that stately piece of Building, which they beheld with so much Admiration and Pleasure, v. 2. Such a Declaration startled and affected them very much, whose Minds were still fill'd with pleasing Views of temporal Power and Grandure. The Destruction of the Temple, and the Dissolution of the Jewish State was shocking News to them; and therefore, it would seem they could not be easy, 'till they had enquired a little more particularly into such an awful Event. As soon therefore as they were got to the Top of the Mount of *Olives*, where they might have a fuller prospect of the City and Temple, they come to our Lord with those Questions in the end of v. 3. *Tell us when these things shall be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the World?* It would seem they imagin'd, that the Destruction of the Temple, and the End of the World would happen at the same period of Time. Tho' our Blessed Lord did not think fit to rectify this mistaken Notion of theirs; yet he gives them a direct Answer to their Question. He lays down a great many Particulars as signs and forerunners of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and seems principally to refer to this Event, from v. 4. to v. 29. Then (I apprehend) he speaks of the end of the World, and his final coming to Judgment, to v. 32. The after rules and cautions were probably intended to agree to both Events.

It would be too tedious, and perhaps needless to run thro' all the Particulars. I will only observe, that after he has mentioned several things, as the Signs of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, (which perhaps might be intended by him to have a distant Reference likewise to the end of the World) he gives them to understand, that they were not such Signs as infallibly pointed out to them the exact and determinate

Period



Period, when those Things should happen; but only when they saw such Things come to pass, which he had now mentioned, they might conclude the time was drawing on apace. He therefore warns them against Security, and prescribes upon them a proper Attention and Watchfulness: A necessary and useful Lesson to those who were to live to see many of the things which he had mentioned come to pass; and were to survive the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. A Lesson equally useful to all Ages of the World afterwards, with respect to his coming to Judgment at the end of the World; since the set Time of his thus coming was known to no man, no not to the *Angels in Heaven*, but the Father only, v. 36. Upon the uncertainty of these great Events he grounds his Cautions and Arguments to *Watchfulness*, and a suitable Preparation, and to Diligence and Fidelity in our Master's Work, v. 42, 44, 45, 46. By all which I apprehend the same thing is intended; and any one of which may be supposed by a fair Construction to take in, and comprehend all the rest.

It is v. 42. which I have pitch'd upon as the Foundation of my present Discourse. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* In speaking to which, the following Particulars (I think) will fairly fall in my way, as proper heads of Discourse. *First*, Our Lord will certainly come. *Secondly*, The particular Time of his coming is to us unknown, and uncertain. *Thirdly*, It is our Duty and our Interest therefore, to preserve an attentive watchful Frame; which Particulars, when I have briefly gone through, I shall propose some Improvement suitable to my Text, and the Occasion.

I. Our Lord will certainly come. This is taken for granted in my Text, and is supposed to be a thing unquestionable. *For ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* That he

he will *come* is confessed, and allow'd. The only thing I have to do under this Head is, to enquire what his *coming* means and refers to ? It is plain by the Question put to our Lord by his Disciples, and the whole tenour of his Discourse thereupon, that his *coming* in this Chapter refers either to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, or the final Judgment, or both.

As to the former, it is plain in fact from the most credible and authentic History, that he has *come* several Hundred Years ago to the Destruction of that rebellious City, and the *Jewish* Temple. The Prophecy of our Saviour, *v. 2.* was literally fulfill'd (above Forty Years after it was deliver'd) by *Titus* the *Roman* Emperor whose Army took the City, and burnt and destroy'd the Temple, rasing it to the very Ground. In this Sense, and with respect to this Event he has already *come*.

And as to the other the *final Judgment*, this undoubtedly will come to pass with equal certainty in God's own time. The Nature and Perfections of God, the Honour and Methods of his Providence and Government, the nature and powers of Man a reasonable and accountable Creature require, that it should be so : And the plain express Declarations of Scripture assures us, that it shall be so. *God has appointed a day in which he will judge the World in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead, Act. xvii. 31. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2. Cor. xv. 10.* I might have turned you to several other places to the same purpose, were it necessary.

But it will bring the matter nearer to us, and more directly point out our Concern in it, to understand the *coming*



of our Lord of the Day and Hour of particular Persons Death. Tho' this is not the plain sense of the Text and Context; yet it can't be thought either improper or unreasonable, so to explain the Phrase; since the Hour of every particular Person's Death is the same thing to him, as the final and general Judgment, as to any farther Preparation that he can make, and as to the Determination of his everlasting Condition. In the Condition in which every Man leaves the World at Death, so will he be found at the general Judgment. *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going, Eccles. ix. 10.* When Death has once closed our Eyes upon this World, and lodg'd us in the silent Grave, there can be no rectifying any Mistake, or doing any thing towards altering, or amending our Condition. After this Life is once at an End, there will be no means or opportunity of doing any thing towards our eternal Salvation. We shall not be put upon the foot of any fresh Tryal, or have any opportunity given us of rectifying what might be amiss, or doing our Work over again. *As the Tree falleth so it must lie, Eccles. xi. 3.* The present Life is the only Season for Work and Tryal: At Death our Work ceases, and we enter upon the World of Recompence. It is not improper or unreasonable then to understand our Lord's coming of the Hour of every particular Person's Death. His coming in this sense is certain and unquestionable. *It is appointed for all men once to die, Heb. ix. 27. There is no discharge in that War, Eccles. viii. 8. The living know they shall die Eccles. ix. 5.* Every day's Experience makes out the Truth, of this. Let the coming of our Lord in the sequel of this Discourse be taken in this Sense, his coming by Death to every particular Person. These Things are important and concerning



cerning to every one of us, and might deserve to be enlarged on ; but they are equally plain and undeniable, and therefore don't need to be farther insisted on.

II. The particular Time of our Lord's *coming* is to us unknown, and uncertain. *Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* Here very little needs to be said.

Let every Man consult his own Experience, and it will tell him, that his Fore-sight takes in but a very little Compass. Which of us can tell what a Day may bring forth, or what may be on the Morrow ? How many have gone to Bed without any apparent Symptoms of Disorder, and have been found dead next Morning ?

If we consider the matter as to second Causes ; upon how slender a Thread does the Life of Man hang ? How innumerable are the Diseases and Accidents that attend, and surround us daily, and stand ready to push us into the Grave every Moment ?

If we consider the matter as to the divine Sovereignty and Government, it is fit that he, who is the Author of our Beings, and the Lord of Life and Death, should keep the measure of our Days, and the bounds of Life in his own Hand. We are his Creatures, and wholly at his Disposal : It is his Prerogative to reserve the Knowledge of future Events to himself. *It is not for you* (says our blessed Lord to his Disciples) *to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has reserved in his own Power,* Act. i. 7.

If we consider the reasonableness and fitness of the Thing, as to the conduct of humane Life, it is very proper that it should be so. It is very fitting that the time of our Death should be concealed from us. We are sent into the World for some End, and have much important Work to do whilst

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we are here, which the relation we stand in to God, and the World above us, demands our Attention to. But if we certainly knew the period of Life, it might prove a very great hindrance to that Work, and of no small disservice to us many Ways.

If we certainly knew that the time of our Death were at a great many Years distance, this might tempt us to squander away our Time very carelessly and unprofitably : This would give greater force to Temptation ; and our great Enemy would have much more Advantage over us. We should, be ready to conclude, we might safely enough give a loose to our vicious Inclinations for many Years yet to come ; and defer our return to God, and regards to Eternity a great while longer without any Hazard. And who does not see, how far this might ensnare, and betray us ?

If we knew that the time of our Death was certainly near, it might probably take us off from the necessary business and offices of Life, and dishearten us as to the innocent Satisfaction and Enjoyments of Life. This would in many cases prove a great disservice to the World, and the common Interests of Mankind. Persons would have no heart to go about their Affairs, or enjoy the Favours of an indulgent Providence ; if they were sure to leave the World in a few Days or Weeks to come. Besides, though this might startle and amaze them ; yet it is very much to be questioned, whether that Religion, which Men were driven into by such certain Terrors and Foresight, would be so genuine and sincere.

It is wisely order'd then, and a kind method of Providence, that we should be kept ignorant of the particular Time of our Death, that we may constantly keep up an attentive



tive Frame, and may not at any time intermit out *Watch*. --- And this leads me to the third Thing.

III. It is our Duty and our Interest therefore constantly to preserve an attentive watchful Frame. *Watch therefore, for ye know not, &c.* This brings me to that part of my Subject, which I take to be of the most Concern to us, as pointing out our Duty grounded upon the foregoing Considerations, and directing us how to behave. Here then it is fitting that I should be something more particular, and yet the time allowed me for this present Service won't permit me to be large.

Let me introduce what I have to say with the following Observation, which has long since been made by many, *viz.* It is a common thing for the Scriptures of Truth, to propose and describe to us the whole of Religion by some eminent Part or Branch of it, which must be so explained, as not to exclude, but take in all the rest. This is the case here, (I apprehend) and *Watchfulness* must be so explain'd, as to take in the most material Parts of the real Christians Character and Conduct. This being premised.

*First.* It must be supposed that the Foundation has been well laid in a thorough and effectual Change upon the Heart and Life. This is the ground-work of all. 'Till this be done; 'till our Natures are changed, the disposition and bent of the Soul altered, the power of Sin broken, the divine Image restored: 'Till the Man is set right in his Apprehension and Judgment, his Will, and Affections; his Conscience, and governing Aims, and the general course of his Life be alter'd from Sin to Holiness, the very thoughts of Death must be terrible and amazing. There can be no meetness for Heaven, no enjoyment of God there without this. It was  
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the great Intention of a blessed Redeemer's coming into the World not only to obtain a Pardon for our past Offences; but recover us to our Conformity to God again, and thereby to our Happiness in him: And which is plac'd before our Eyes in Scripture in such Language as this: *To turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God, Act. xxvi. 18. Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14.* And we are assured by him himself, who came upon this Errand, *That except we are converted or born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, John iii. 3, 5.* To the same purpose the Apostle declares, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14.* 'Till this Change be wrought we are in a state of Condemnation, without any regular hopes of Heaven; and, if Death find us in such Circumstances, it must consign us over to everlasting Misery. It is fitting then that *Watchfulness* with respect to our Lord's coming should be so explain'd, as to include thus much; since we are in no sense prepar'd for Death 'till this Change be wro't.

And this is no arbitrary and whimsical Account of the matter; since we find in Scripture that a state and course of Sin is many times compared to, and described by *Sleep*, signifying that unrenewed Souls are senseless and unactive as to the main Business and ends of Life; and a renewed and gracious Condition is compared to *watching* and *waking*, and supposes Persons to consider and attend to the work, and events of Life, and apply accordingly. I'll turn you to but one place or two at present for the proof of this See 1 Thes. v. 4, 5, 6. *But ye, Brethren; are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch, and be*

*sober, See again, 2 Tim. ii. 26. That they may recover themselves from the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.* Where the word which is render'd *recover* signifies awaking out of Sleep; and is a metaphorical Expression taken from Persons that are laid fast asleep by the fumes of Wine or strong Drink. How senseless are such Persons commonly, and how difficultly awaked? This properly enough resembles the case of the unreclaimed Sinner, and shews him to be without any spiritual Sense, or virtuous Inclinations, or regular motion towards God and Happiness. These Places justify me in explaining *Watchfulness* after this manner. It is supposed that the Foundation be well laid in a thorough and effectual *Change* upon the Heart and Life. When this is done,

*Secondly. Watchfulness* may respect the Snares and Dangers, which surround us in the christian Life, and supposes that we are careful to guard against them. Particularly,

We must guard against wilful and presumptuous Sins. We carry corrupt and depraved Natures about us, not fully heal'd and cur'd even by renewing Grace. We are surrounded by Temptations on every side: There is no circumstance of Life, but may prove the occasion of Sin to us; and if we deliberately indulge our selves in sinful Compliances, this must contract great Guilt, expose us to the wrath of God, and put us into a very uncomfortable posture for Death, *or the coming of our Lord.* Though sins of Infirmary mourned over, and faithfully striven against, may consist with the favour of God, and peace of Conscience, and the regular hopes of Heaven; yet presumptuous and chosen Transgressions are of another Nature. These must needs breed Fears, and weaken our Hopes: And though they should be retracted



ed by a deep Repentance, yet they are seldom quite blotted out of the records of Conscience, and upon every review, especially under the Apprehension of our approaching Change, sit very uneasy upon the Mind. They make Death look much more ghastly, and make our Passage more uncomfortable, though it should be safe. Here is reason and occasion for *Watchfulness*, that we may guard against such Sins.

Again, We may be in danger from the possessions and enjoyments of the World. These are apt to insinuate themselves too far into our Thoughts and Affections, and to engage our Hearts and our Attention more than is meet, and here is occasion for *Watchfulness*. For if we suffer our Affections to take too fast hold of present Things, and our Desires to launch out too far, this will make us the more unwilling to die, and render the summons of our great Master much more unwelcome. One would think a good Man should be very much out of Countenance (to say no worse of it) to have his Lord surprize him as busy and intent upon the affairs and enjoyments of this Life, as if these were his only, or his main Concerns. It is a proper part, and business of *Watchfulness* to compose our Minds to a holy indifference to present Things, and often to challenge and arrest us (as it were) in the midst of our present Projects and Pursuits, with some such Language as this. "What art thou now doing, O my Soul? What means this eager prosecution of such or such a Design? Why are thy Affections so closely united to such, or such a dear Enjoyment? Why dost thou seem so easy, and so pleased with thy present Successes and Gains? Is this agreeable to thy Character, and thy Hopes? Cou'dst thou answer it to thyself



“ self, or account for it to thy great Master to be surpriz’d  
 “ in such a Posture ? ”

*Thirdly, Watchfulness* may respect the opportunities for Service which are put into our Hands, and the various Trusts committed to us, and may imply a Care to improve, and use them faithfully. This is a part of the work and business of *Watchfulness*. Whatever occasions offer themselves of promoting the glory God, and the interests of Religion in the World; of serving our fellow Christians by our Advice, Protection, and Charity; whatever calls we have to fill up our Relations and Place in the World, with the proper Duties thereof; or Opportunities may be afforded us of improving our own Souls in the Graces and Virtues of the christian Life, these should be carefully observ’d, and employ’d by us.

We should, again, look upon Wealth and Riches, Authority and Influence in the World, superiour Endowments of Mind, &c. as so many Trusts put into our Hands, and for which we must be accountable. If we are careful to use these for the service of God, and the good of Mankind, we may expect the *coming* of our Lord with greater Comfort and Assurance. If such Trusts as these are suffered to grow up in our Hands without any Improvement, or any proportionable Improvement, how can we escape the character and doom of unprofitable Servants? What shall we in such a case be able to answer to such a charge as that, if brought against us by our great Master? *I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me, Mat. xxv. 43, 44, 45.*

*Fourthly, My Text* requires, that I briefly consider *Watchfulness*

fulness with a particular eye and reference to our Lord's coming, to our Lord's coming by Death to every one of us, which is the sense I have before fixed upon this Phrase. In this view Watchfulness may imply the following Things, which I will but barely mention. --- A firm belief and perswasion of his thus coming : That he will thus come to every one of us, sooner or later. This is a matter that admits of no Dispute. --- A frequent remembrance of this ; that we call it to mind often, and don't suffer the Thoughts of it to be long absent from us at any time ---- And a particular application to such Duties and Exercises of Religion, as are in a special manner suited to put the Soul into a proper posture for the coming of our Lord ; such as solemn stated Prayer, serious examination of our Hearts and Ways, frequent Meditations on the invisible World and State, with a proper Regard to our Lord Jesus Christ in all.

By solemn Prayer we must fetch down those supplies of Wisdom and Grace from Heaven daily, which must be necessary to our Guidance and Help in the whole of our christian Course. Prayer (says one) is one of the most necessary instruments of Religion, it helps us to use the spiritual Armour, and contributes not a little to our success in our Warfare ; it derives Strength and Ability from above, for the performance of other Duties, and communicates Life and Vigour to them. For these things God will be enquired of by us, and humbly sought unto. And we have great Encouragement to this Duty from such a Declaration as that, Mat. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you*



*you, whom, if his son ask bread, will ye give him a stone : Or, if he ask a fish, will ye give him a serpent ? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him ?* Besides, it not only thus opens Heaven, and drrows down the choicest of Blessings ; but it very much contributes to keep up a suitable warmth, and liveliness upon the Spirit of a Christian.

Serious examination of our Hearts and Ways would contribute to put the Soul in a proper Posture for the *coming of our Lord*. We should look over the records of Conscience frequently ; and see how matters stand betwixt God, and our own Souls. In this way we may best rectify our Mistakes, retrieve our Backslidings, apply our Care, where it is most wanted, and excite our Diligence. If we thus frequently *commune with our own hearts* : bring our selves to the test, and see how far our Temper and Conduct agree with our Rule ; and thus keep the account even ; this will put us into the best Posture for our *Lord's coming*.

Frequent Meditations on the invisible World and State are useful to the same End. *Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel* ; much of the Glories and Blessedness of the World to come are revealed there. The more we converse with these things in our serious Thoughts now, the better fitted shall we be, for our passage to the other World, and our entrance upon it's Services and Happiness.

*Lastly*. We must maintain a proper Regard to our Lord Jesus Christ in all ; *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal Life*, Epist. Jude v. 21. We must lay the stress of our hopes for favour, and acceptance with God, and our title to everlasting Happiness on his Merits, and Intercession  
on



on : concerned to be found in him, and interested in him, who alone can answer for us, who is *the resurrection and the life*, and who alone can open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

### U S E.

I have left my self very little room, and not much occasion to enlarge in a way of Improvement. The whole of what I have offered, has been proposed in a plain, and practical Way. Let the advice of our blessed Lord be seriously attended to, and considered by every one of you. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* Remember these are the words of him in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom; who knew perfectly what was in man; and before whose Tribunal you must every one of you in a very little time appear. He will most certainly come by Death to every Person in this numerous Assembly. I know, you don't question it; but consider it, as it deserves. Let the important Hour be often before your Eyes. It will be found an awful thing to leave one World, and enter upon the other, whatever slight Thoughts you may have of the matter now. He may come quickly to any one of you. Death can't be a great way off, tho' you should reach the usual period of humane Life. *Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days,* Job xiv. 1. Firmly believe, what you don't pretend to deny; and let such a Belief have it's proper Influence on you. He may come suddenly, and with a very little warning. We have had many instances lately. Our deceased Friend was a very affecting one; none about her being aware of any previous, threat'ning Indisposition. *Watch therefore.* Review the Particulars mentioned, and bring them down to common Use. See that the Foundation be well laid

laid in an effectual change upon your Hearts and Lives ; in other words, that you be Christians indeed. Look upon this as a matter of the utmost Importance to you. You cannot expect Death with Comfort in any other Condition. *Watch*, and relolve against presumptuous Sins, and allowed Guile. Observe, and improve the Opportunities, which present of promoting the glory of God, and being useful in your place ; and employ the Talents put into your Hands, as those, that must give an Account. Make conscience of those Duties, which you have heard, will put you into the properest Posture for your *Lord's* coming : Such as stated Prayer, serious examination of your Hearts and Ways ; frequent Meditations on the invisible World and State, with a particular Eye to the Lord Jesus for your Acceptance in all, and as your chiefest Security and Refuge. Let these things find Acceptance with you, and influence your Conduct. Thus often think of your *Lord's coming*, thus prepare for it, and thus live for Eternity.

The worthy Person, whose sudden Death was the occasion of this Discourse, gave us the example of such a Conduct, and, I doubt not, reaps the happy Fruits of it. To support such a Declaration, and such Hopes, I might be led to attempt her Character. But my settled Judgment, and ordinary Practice forbid me to enlarge this way. Otherwise, I could have told you, that she was descended of a reputable Family. Her Grand-father (as I have been inform'd) having been no less than three times Mayor of this Corporation of *Derby*. Her Father was educated as a Merchant at *Amsterdam*. One of her Unkles was an Attendant on King *Charles II*, during his Exile, and prefer'd to a profitable place at *Hull*, after the Restoration. But these things are scarce worth



worth the mentioning; and she her self p'ac'd them to little or no Account. Her first and governing Concern was to secure an interest in God, and a special Relation to him. This appeared in the whole of her behaviour in that Family, (Mr. Crompton's Family) where she had lived upwards of Fifty Years; and the affairs of which Family, (I mean within doors) she conducted for a great many of those Years with great Prudence and Integrity. She interested her self very much in the Happiness of every Member of it, rejoicing heartily in all their Satisfaction, and bearing a part in all their Grievs and Distresses; and was very much esteem'd, and valued by every one of them. If she exceeded in any thing, it was in her too great Sollicitousness, and Care about them; which yet was the fruit of that undissembled Affection, she bore to them.

She was a great many Years a religious and exemplary Member of this Society, and shewed her respect to it, by making a handsome Present of two large silver Cups, to be used at the *Lord's-Supper*; and which have been some time past, and are now in my Possession. This I chuse to mention thus publickly, that it may be more generally known, and remembered, and to prevent (if it may be) their being alienated, or lost in times to come.

Though she was far advanced in Years, having almost reached the end of her 77th Year, and was subject to many infirmities of Body; yet her removal at last was very sudden, and surprising. There appeared no unusual symptoms of Disorder the Day before, nor on that Morning on which she died. One of the Servants of the Family went up to her Bed-side, and she appeared as well as usual, she telling the Maid, she was afraid, she had let her lie too long, and

had not called her soon enough. She got up, and went in to her Closet, where it was her constant practice to spend a considerable time daily. By all Circumstances it is justly concluded, that she died whilst she was at her private Devotions. Oh! How desirable, and happy a case, to be taken from present converses with God below, to the more immediate, delightful, and perfect Services of the World above! Her general and known Character abundantly supports such Hopes. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing, Mat. xxiv. 46.*

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